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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2201

INFO RUEHZN/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

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TAGS: SENV ENRG KGHG TRGY KSCA CH IT

SUBJECT: U.S./ITALY/CHINA: OPPORTUNITIES FOR CLIMATE AND  
LOW-CARBON-TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION

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1510 d) 08 Rome 1415 e) 08 Rome 1327

¶1. (SBU) Italian Environment Director General Corrado Clini, a pillar of Italy's climate negotiations for over 15 years, in recent months has strongly called, both in private and publicly, for Italy-U.S. collaboration in developing and deploying clean energy technology in China and other countries. DG Clini's most recent comments occurred at a May 26 low-carbon technology transfer conference organized by the Embassy and his directorate, along with other Italian partners. He highlighted three sectors for potential collaboration: energy efficiency, bioenergy, and green buildings. (See ref a for more details.)

¶2. (SBU) Italy has an active climate technical cooperation program, with annual funding of 193 million Euros, 125 million from the Foreign Affairs Ministry and 68 million from the Environment Ministry, a good part of which goes to China. Among its results is the "green building" in Beijing cited by U.S. Energy Secretary Chu as a model to be followed in energy efficiency. Clini's directorate also has a climate cooperation program with the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS), covering both adaptation and mitigation, which has won praise from international observers and from the U.S. Congress (ref c; see ref b for more details on Italy's climate programs). In February 19, 2009 meetings in Rome, U.S. House Foreign Affairs Asia, Pacific and the Global Environment Subcommittee Chair Eni Faleomavaega expressed interest in having the U.S. join the AOSIS project in some way.

¶3. (SBU) DG Clini's long experience and strategic use of technical assistance funds make him an influential figure in EU and global climate negotiations (ref d). He places high value on the U.S.-Italy climate change science and technology partnership, launched in 2001, under whose auspices the May 26 conference was held. In meetings with USG officials over the last year (e.g., ref e), he repeatedly has called for reinvigorating the U.S.-Italy partnership, and for focusing joint efforts on low-carbon technology development and deployment in third countries such as China and Brazil. At the May 26 conference, Clini stressed the consistency of his proposal with the low-carbon technology discussions which took place at the Major Economies Forum (MEF) in Paris the day before. He also called pointedly for the U.S. and Italy to define, by the end of 2009, how they want the U.S.-Italy partnership to evolve and what future joint activities to undertake.

¶4. (SBU) In light of the success of some of Italy's climate cooperation programs, of DG Clini's goodwill toward the U.S., and of his influence with other climate negotiators, Post recommends that Washington agencies find a way to continue and strengthen U.S.-Italy climate cooperation. One likely area for collaboration could be low-carbon technology deployment in China, perhaps within the MEF framework, with the aim of integrating collaboration with Italy into U.S. plans for low-carbon technology promotion in emerging and developing economies.

DIBBLE